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Harris County Public Health Receives Funding for Environmental Health Programs
Programs include Lead Abatement and Prevention, and Neighborhood Nuisance Abatement

Houston – Yesterday the Harris County Commissioners Court made significant investments in two environmental public health programs to protect children from lead exposure and demolish unsafe building structures in County neighborhoods.

The Lead Abatement Program received \$20 million to expand its current efforts. Funding will increase the program's capacity to reduce lead exposure among Harris County children.

Separately, \$3 million was approved for the Neighborhood Nuisance Abatement Program to proactively reduce nuisance properties throughout the County. These unsafe structures pose a public nuisance and are a health and safety risk to area residents, including children.

Both programs received funding from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA).

"The positive community health outcomes we can achieve through these two programs will benefit families in neighborhoods who reside near unsafe buildings or in older homes with lead paint," said Harris County Public Health (HCPH) Executive Director Barbie Robinson. "Healthier people and communities promote healthier lives. In addition to improved quality of life and ensuring children can grow into healthy adults, there are other benefits such as lower health care costs, and safer neighborhoods."

Harris County Precinct 2 Commissioner Adrian Garcia said funding for the Neighborhood Abatement Program would contribute to decreasing crime in vulnerable neighborhoods while improving the health of communities.

"I'm proud to take these steps today that will improve public safety and clean up nuisance properties in our neighborhoods," said Commissioner Garcia, who served for 23 years with the Houston Police Department and as Harris County Sheriff.

"When left unchecked, these abandoned and neglected properties threaten the health and safety of those around them and pose a potential danger to curious youngsters. This new program will ensure we aggressively seek out and secure or demolish these neighborhood nuisances which create opportunities to harbor gang and drug activity," said Commissioner Garcia.

HCPH is the local public health agency for the Harris County, Texas jurisdiction. It provides a wide variety of public health activities and services aimed at improving the health and well-being of the Harris County community.

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Lead Abatement and Prevention Program

Children from low-income households are more likely to live in homes that need lead remediation and less likely to be tested for blood lead levels. Lead poisoning in children can cause brain development delays, speech and language problems, damage to the nervous system and kidneys, and in rare cases, death. Lead paint was banned in 1978, but children living in homes built before then are at risk.

In Harris County, excluding the City of Houston, 122,000 homes were built before 1978 and are at risk of lead-based paint. While the existing Lead Abatement and Prevention Program presently remediates an average of 60 homes per year, the proposed program will increase remediation to 200 homes per year. The expanded program increases the of families who would benefit by reducing their exposure to lead, thus improving their health and enhancing their quality of life.

HCPH recommends children age six or younger be tested for lead by a medical provider at least once. Children receiving WIC can be tested at HCPH's Antoine and Shaver WIC clinics. To make an appointment with WIC please call (713) 439-6145.

Neighborhood Nuisance Abatement Program

The \$3 million received in ARPA funding from the Court to the Neighborhood Nuisance Abatement Program will increase efforts to create safer, healthier, and more sustainable neighborhoods.

This program will secure or demolish unsafe structures, secure unsafe abandoned swimming pools, and remove refuse, garbage, and high weeds/vegetation to prevent pests from infesting the building.

The increased funding will also reduce environmental health disparities and improve the quality of life in various communities by abating over 1,100 building structures that qualify as nuisances over the next four years.

The HCPH Environmental Public Health Division will work closely with all four County Precincts to prioritize those neighborhoods with high abatement needs based on a cyclical review of nuisance reports.

For additional information on [Neighborhood Nuisance](#), please call (713) 274-6300.

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